

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Recruitment of a Senior Consultant Capacity Building for SMEs and Women-Led SMEs in the Clean Energy Sector

**ECOWAS CENTRE FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY
CENTRO PARA AS ENERGIAS RENOVÁVEIS E EFICIÊNCIA ENERGÉTICA DA CEDEAO
CENTRE POUR LES ENERGIES RENOUVELABLES ET L'EFFICACITÉ ENERGÉTIQUE DE LA CEDEAO**



Project: Women and Clean Energy in West Africa (WOCEWA)

Contract Type: International Consultancy

Consultant Level: Senior Consultant

Mission Duration: 65 working days

Duty Station: Home based

1. Introduction

The ECOWAS Policy for Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access (ECOW-GEN, 2017) established the necessary institutional and policy framework to integrate the gender dimension into energy planning, sectoral governance, and entrepreneurial opportunities.

Despite this framework, the energy sector in the ECOWAS region continues to face persistent challenges in achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 7: ensuring universal access to affordable, reliable, and modern energy services. Significant disparities between men and women are observed throughout the sector's value chains. Currently, women's representation in the sector is only about 20%. The sectoral goal is to achieve 50-50 parity by 2030.

To bridge this gap, the ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE), with the support of Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), is focusing its efforts on women's entrepreneurship in the clean energy sector. The objective is to identify and analyze the specific challenges and obstacles related to women's entrepreneurship to improve the representation and participation of women in this field.

This initiative is part of the vision for a just and inclusive transition: the full participation of women, as producers, consumers, and entrepreneurs, becomes an essential indicator of performance and justice in energy governance in the ECOWAS region.

Consequently, a Gender Equality Index (GEI) assessment report for SMEs in the clean energy sector in the ECOWAS region and a strategic roadmap for acceleration have been proposed. The results reveal a Global Index of 48.1/100, positioning the region in a "lower intermediate" equality zone. To achieve the regional goal of 50-50 parity by 2030 in the energy sector, it is imperative to implement an integrated strategy aimed at transforming the women's entrepreneurial ecosystem and ensuring its competitiveness. This vision positions women's entrepreneurship as a central pillar of a just and inclusive energy transition in the ECOWAS region.

A Gender Equality Index Action Plan (GEI-AP), designed for the indicative period 2026-2030, is structured around three complementary pillars aimed at overcoming identified structural barriers: **Financing**, **Skills/Quality**, and **Regional Partnerships**. The Knowledge domain received a low score of 41.2/100.

This mission is directly aligned with the GEI Action Plan (GEI-AP) 2026-2030, targeting the Skills and Quality Pillar. The goal is to professionalize the sector by equipping SMEs in general and women-led SMEs (WSMEs)

in particular with the necessary technical and managerial skills to improve their competitiveness and investment readiness.

2. Objective of the Work

General Objective

To strengthen the capacity of SMEs in the clean energy sector, particularly those led by women, in the ECOWAS region, by providing targeted training, coaching, and technical support for the implementation of the Gender Equality Index (GEI) recommendations and the improvement of their investment readiness and market access.

Specific Objectives

- a) Develop and deliver accessible online training (e-learning/YouTube) to disseminate key GEI assessment knowledge to a wide audience of SMEs to support SMEs in making the necessary operational and/or structural adjustments for implementing new practices (e.g., HR policies, procurement processes, market approach, internal governance).
- b) Provide direct and personalized coaching to at least 100 selected SMEs over a six-month period to support the concrete implementation of GEI recommendations in their business operations.
- c) Provide specialized technical support to Women-Led SMEs (WSMEs) for the preparation and improvement of critical business and financial documents (audited financial statements, cash flow forecasts, etc.) to meet the requirements of financing institutions.

3. Scope and Key Activities of the Mission

The Senior Consultant will carry out the following activities, aiming to reach at least **100 coached SMEs** during the period.

A. Training Needs Assessment

Before designing the curriculum, the Consultant shall perform a comprehensive Training Needs Assessment targeting SMEs in the energy sector. This assessment aims to identify specific skills gaps and technical requirements to ensure the training program is tailored to the actual market needs.

B. Training and Knowledge Dissemination (Online/e-learning)

- Development and delivery of online training material (e-learning, interactive modules) to enable SMEs to understand and integrate the recommendations of the GEI assessment.
- Creation of video tutorials and targeted YouTube content for broad and accessible dissemination on key topics (e.g., post-assessment operational adjustments, basic financial management).
- Organization of live webinars/training sessions on online platforms to enhance learning and answer questions.

C. Individual Coaching and Implementation (100 targeted SMEs)

- Provide individual support ("one-on-one support") to selected SMEs to translate the GEI assessment recommendations into concrete and achievable action plans.
- Coach SME leaders on adjusting their business models, reorganizing their processes, and identifying new market opportunities.
- Ensure regular follow-up and mentoring throughout the period to guarantee the sustainability of changes.

D. Preparation for Access to Financing (Focus on WSMEs)

- Collaborate with Women-Led SMEs (WSMEs) to improve the quality of their corporate and financial documents to meet the requirements of financial institutions.
- Support WSMEs in producing essential documents, notably:
 - Audited financial statements (or preparation for audit).
 - Detailed cash-flow forecasts.
 - Robust technical studies and business plans (if required by financiers).
- Act as an interface between SMEs and financial institutions (banks, investment funds) to facilitate financing discussions.

4. Consultant Tasks and Responsibilities

The Senior Consultant is responsible for designing and delivering a support program targeting at least 100 WSMEs over a period of 6 months of personalized accompaniment.

A. Training and Knowledge Dissemination (E-learning/Digital)

Activity	Description
Program Design	Develop the detailed online training program focused on financial modeling, business management, and GEI assessment recommendations.
Digital Content Production	Produce at least 3 educational videos for the ECREEE YouTube channel (in French, English, and Portuguese) and downloadable course materials.
Facilitation and Evaluation	Facilitate 4 online training sessions (each lasting 5 days) and evaluate their impact.

B. Personalized GEI Support (100 SMEs over 6 months)

- Coach SME leaders monthly for 6 months.
- Ensure regular monitoring of progress and write progress reports.
- Facilitate the exchange of best practices among SMEs.

C. Support for WSMEs for Access to Financing

- Assist WSMEs in structuring their financing application files.
- Support the preparation of certified financial statements, cash flow forecasts, and technical studies.

- Train women leaders on the requirements of donors and financial institutions.
- Ensure a link between WSMEs and potential financial partners.

5. Expected Deliverables

The expected deliverables from the Senior Consultant:

Deliverables	Timeline (Weeks)	Estimated effort (M-D)
Contract Signature	W0	N/A
Kick-off Meeting	W0 +1 week	1 M-D
Needs Assessment & Inception Report (Detailed program, downloadable supports, and execution plan)	W0 +3 weeks	10 M-D
Organization of 4 training sessions on the defined key themes (online)	W1 = W0 + 10 weeks	15 M-D
Production of 3 educational videos (in FR, EN, PT) for the ECRECE channel.	W0 + 14 weeks	12 M-D
1 Training Report	W0 + 15 weeks	2 M-D
Coaching and monitoring of the progress of 100 SMEs	W1 + 23 weeks	23 M-D
1 Final Report with impact indicators, lessons learned, and recommendations	W0 + 24 weeks	2 M-D
TOTAL	6 months	65 Man-Days

The contract duration should be sixty-five (65) non-consecutive days.

6. Language

The consultant must prepare the reports in English and ensure their translation into the two other official ECOWAS languages (French and Portuguese).

7. Remuneration and Disbursement Schedule

Remuneration will be paid according to the following stages:

- **25%** upon submission of the **Initial Report**
- **50%** upon presentation of the **Training Report**
- **25%** upon presentation of the **Final Report**

8. Profile and Qualifications of the Senior Consultant

The consultant should meet the following qualifications:

General Competencies:

- **Education:** Advanced university degree (Master's level or equivalent) in Management, Finance, Economics, Gender and Development, or a relevant field.
- **General Experience:** Minimum 10 years of experience in supporting (coaching, consulting) SMEs and/or women's entrepreneurship in the clean energy sector.
- **Languages:** Excellent command of French and English (written and spoken). Knowledge of Portuguese is a major asset.

Specific Competencies:

- **Digital Learning:** Proven experience in creating e-learning content and managing/producing content for platforms like YouTube.
- **Finance/Banking:** Strong expertise in financial analysis, modeling, preparing funding applications for financial institutions, and knowledge of Green Finance criteria.
- **Energy Sector:** Understanding of the issues in the Clean Energy sector and the specific challenges of WSMEs in the ECOWAS region.

9. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation of proposals and the awarding of the contract (consultancy) will be based on expertise, technical skills, and budget. ECREEE reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal received without providing any explanation.

Interested candidates are requested to submit their dossier, including:

A Technical Proposal (80%)

- **Detailed Technical Proposal document** (including legal documents, work methodology, and schedule).
- **An updated CV** highlighting relevant experiences.
- Copy of the candidate's university degrees and other technical training related to the mission.
- Examples of similar achievements (e.g., links to online training, SME support reports).
- At least three recent professional references.

A Financial Proposal (20%)

Personal Fees: budget table according to the expert's scheme (showing the individual daily fees of the experts in US dollars, all taxes included).

Proposals will be evaluated using a Quality and Cost-Based Selection (QCBS) method. Additional information or requests for clarification may be requested from ECREEE.

Submission of Applications

Electronic offers (in PDF format) must be submitted by email no later than **February 23, 2026, at 23:59 (UTC-1)** to the following address: senior-consultant@ecreee.org. Please clearly indicate in the email subject line: **"WOCEWA Capacity Building for SMEs and WSMEs"**.

For enquiries, write to pzidago@ecreee.org ; eflan@ecreee.org and adeoliveira@ecreee.org .

Do not copy any other email address, but the tender email, or your application will be disqualified.